

Significance of today

Seventy years ago, Little Rock-born Douglas MacArthur, on the decks of the USS Missouri, formally accepted the surrender of Japan. The War in the Pacific and World War II was over. The historic significance of the day resonated with the many observers invited to Tokyo Bay for that ceremony Sept. 2, 1945. Actor Tony Curtis, then a young sailor, watched with a great sense of accomplishment from the USS Proteus, a submarine tender that supported the American submarine force as it decimated Japanese shipping. Six submarines gently bobbed on each side of the Proteus, a lethal honor guard of 12. One of these submarines, the USS Razorback, now floats peacefully in the Arkansas River, a living monument owned by the city of North Little Rock and respectfully maintained by subsequent generations of local Navy veterans.

The Razorback sank 18 Japanese vessels, the majority with deck guns, some with torpedoes. She also picked up five American flyers during successful "lifeguard" missions in which submarines would preposition themselves at places known to American flyers returning from dangerous bombing missions. Sept. 2, 1944, one year earlier, a young George H.W. Bush was picked up by the USS Finback during such a rescue.

I am old enough to have grown up surrounded by men who knew this war; uncles, neighbors, a father. My four young sons will not know these men, but they love to tour the Razorback and hear its stories. When it is joined by the USS Hoga, the heroic tugboat present at Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, soon to start its journey to Arkansas, the significance of Sept. 2, 1945, will be even more vivid to them and coming generations ... if we work together to preserve and tell the stories.

VIC SNYDER

Little Rock

Editor's note: Vic Snyder is a board member of the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum.

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Diane Whitbey, City Clerk and Collector
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